



## CONNECTICUT STATE POLICE UNION

February 27, 2014

Good afternoon Senator Crisco, Representative Megna, Senator Hartley, Representative Wright and distinguished members of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee.

The Connecticut State Police Union on behalf of its membership **OPPOSES House Bill 5252 AN ACT CONCERNING ELECTRONIC PROOF OF AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE IDENTIFICATION CARDS**

The Connecticut State Police Union opposes this proposed bill in the interest of trooper safety concerns that are inherent with the passage of such a bill. For years, the standard has been an operator has been required to produce a valid insurance card per CGS 14-213b. These insurance cards are requested by police officers and troopers at motor vehicle stops, motor vehicle accidents and at other times involving an interaction with a motorist.

This bill would further jeopardize the safety of troopers due to the possibility that a trooper would have to take possession of the motorists' cell phone or other digital device in order to properly record the insurance card policy number, specifically during the investigation of motor vehicle accidents. During these investigations, it is required for the troopers to document the Insurance Company name and policy number for the accident report. In many scenarios involving multiple vehicles involved in an accident, it is not realistic for a trooper to have to secure multiple phones or devices in order to properly document information that is required on the Department of Transportation form known as the PR-1. Also, State Troopers are not supplied with any type of portable bar code reader.

Additionally this bill would be problematic in many ways despite any protection from damage to the device containing the insurance information that may be allowed in the bill. Though, claims against the State can be expected if the devices were accidentally dropped or damaged, and devices can range in price from \$300.00 - \$800.00 or more. Among other reasons problematic to this bill are the unfamiliarity with the multitude of devices on the market; the possibility of incoming text messages or phone calls that appear on the screen, creating privacy issues, or these incoming messages or calls may disrupt the troopers ability to view the required information; that devices automatically lock screen after a period of time which would force the troopers to return to the operator to unlock the screen in order to get information and the possibility of false complaints made against troopers regarding the access to information, contacts, photos on the device by motorists who may have received a summons from the trooper.

More importantly and directly related to the safety of our troopers is the fact that conducting motor vehicle stops whether during daytime or nighttime hours is a highly dangerous part of law enforcement. Police officers and Troopers are trained to keep their gun hand free and to be prepared at all times for the possibility of having to draw their duty weapon in defense of their own lives while engaging a motorist. This unknown danger is real with every police officer and trooper in the country everyday on every motor vehicle stop. This Bill would require the police officer and trooper to take possession of the device in order to read the information, provided



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that ambient light and glare allows it to be read easily. By doing so, the officer or trooper would be distracted from the occupants of the vehicle, while holding a flashlight in one arm to illuminate the passenger area of the vehicle by having to take hold of a device on which the insurance information was contained. This Bill would place every police officer and trooper in danger unnecessarily on every motor vehicle stop if passed.

The Connecticut State Police Union can recognize the advances in technology with the advent of smart phones and applications for such use in business and payment of services. However based on the realistic danger inherent to police work, the use of an electronic insurance card, does not accomplish anything except place troopers and police officers in more of a dangerous situation than they already are, while conducting motor vehicle stops on Connecticut's roadways and highways, protecting the citizens of this State and enforcing its' laws.

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